



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

1400 South 19th Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59718-5496

Greetings,

Thank you for taking the time to attend the recent bison scoping meeting that was held in Great Falls. We estimate that approximately 55 individuals attended this meeting. Public scoping is an initial step in the development of a programmatic environmental impact statement that will examine the future of bison in Montana as wildlife. Attached you will find a compilation of all of the comments as they were recorded during the recent meeting in Great Falls. We have transcribed the comments that were submitted during the meeting exactly as they were recorded. There are a few instances where the handwriting was not clear and the comments reflect this. Please review the comments and let us know if there are additional comments you would like to submit. Fish, Wildlife, & Parks will be accepting public comments via regular mail, e-mail, or online through June 25th, 2012. The comments that were captured at each of the regional meetings and those submitted outside of the meetings will be available for review on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks website following the closure of the comment period.

We would like to thank you again for attending the recent meeting and hope that you will remain part of this process as Fish, Wildlife & Parks moves forward with the development of the programmatic environmental impact statement.

Sincerely,

Arnold Dood and Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks

To Submit Comments or Gain More Information

<i>FWP Website:</i> http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/management/bison/future.html#scoping	<i>Written Comments:</i> MT FWP Bison Plan Scoping ATTN: Arnold Dood 1400 South 19 th Ave Bozeman, MT 59718	<i>E-mail Comments:</i> Bison_Management@ mt.gov
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Great Falls Public Scoping Meeting May 23rd, 2012

Issues and Concerns:

- What are all the objectives of managing bison – native species renewable source – etc.
- Montana weather will create situations that will result in high mortality – will there be a feeding program? Migration to where?
- Why is buffalo considered a threat?
- Will likely need some type of constraints even though it's a wild population of bison block fences/barriers/shoot (kill) permits.
- Bison need to be managed differently than elk and deer
- What plan will you Have to Keep Bison on designated Range
- Buffalo are migrating animals and they need a boundary.
- How will FWP keep bison where they are supposed to be?
- Is there a problem with shepherds
- If bring back keeping them where they are supposed to be will be a headache
- If get too many bulls breeding season comes 1 becomes dominant the others will continue to fight and move off in all directions ruining fences.
- Safety going down the Road w/Free ranging Bison
- Safety concerns for recreationists, ranchers, farmers, etc with bison on public lands.
- Human safety/public safety
 - Refute that the risk is small
 - Concern for hikers/other public land users →hunter, angler
 - Buffalo is such a dangerous animal
 - Will rip a horse
- If chasing me and my horse/ATV can I shoot them
- Human concern hasn't been up to the level it should be
- Bison need to be Fenced In Not Fenced out.
- Containment, Location of Bison
- If bison are placed on public land, how will they be contained on this land (in relation to adjacent landowners – ranchers, farmers, etc.)?
- Big animal like that can create some significant damage
- MT in general is a fence out state so if we had free-ranging bison who is responsible for fencing
- Concerned if Buffalo are management like wildlife how can they be contained
- Fencing – some of the background studies portray bison at rest in normal grazing situations – not hunted, not w/ a pack of wolves chasing them
- Is the Moise model being considered? Is it an option
- How are you going to manage chaos when a breakout happens?
- Other possibilities For Fencing other Than Traditional materials.
- Fencing Laws
- Spotted Dog – look at the fencing
 - Cost – was astronomical
 - Who pays for this
 - We'll pay for it twice – taxes & losses
- Disease (brucellosis) has unknowns to still be explored until all possible scenarios known – disease potential there
- What's the plan is disease outbreak does occur.
- Any Management plan should address diseased animals
- Have to slaughter bison that are diseased.
- Only transplant disease free bison.
- FWP needs to test elk populations for brucellosis in any area being considered for bison relocation.
- Have seen lack of skills, talents, & capabilities and lack of commitment by the FWP & a plan to address disease mgmt in wildlife & the wild/livestock interface from FWP relative to CWD, other diseases need a disease mgmt plan

- If sheep could pass diseases to bison. – Who would be liable
- Where will the animals originate from & how will FWP validate brucellosis free-status of these animals.
- If one of the buff gets in w/ my cattle how will it impact me. I've had the experience of having to stay up till midnight bleeding cattle due to brucellosis and FWP did not pay for it to producers did.
- Disease re-infection of disease free bison – from elk – wildlife move over landscape – them to livestock (elk can migrate long distances – 100+ miles)
- Other diseases – how will these be handled
- Free roaming bison cause a threat to our biosecurity such as diseases such as brucellosis.
- If we bring up YNP bison --My concern is – it's bison (certainly)
 - It's the human zoonotic disease B. Abortus
 - It's on the Homeland Security list of bio-terrorism select agents (CDC type)
- Billings Gazette continues to say brucellosis is an animal disease
- Brucellosis is a concern
- All diseases of ruminants are a concern
- Bison are not affected by brucellosis
 - They are immune to brucellosis
 - Livestock will abort – bison will not
 - The only way that brucellosis can be spread is from the afterbirth
- Undulate fever it does come from dom. cows there raw milk
 - Can also come from reproductive fluids
- Ranchers & veterinarians today have ungulate fever
- Two hunters in Yellowstone area got ungulate. Fever from getting an elk in 90s (documented in public health records)
- The only way you can test for brucellosis in elk is thru tissue test not blood
- Genetically pure – move to another area YNP overpopulation – near area now will – may have same problem move the problem – instead of solve problem
- If a free roaming population – How will genetic party be maintained?
- Would be nice to see the genetics study that show YNP bison are pure
- Don't think we're talking about a genetic pure strain
- Yes, we are – Do you want these to be genetically pure?
- Genetically pure bison would have to be really fenced to keep them pure & managed
- Model on maintaining genetic diversity/ genetic viable population is questioned as bison die (Large Animal)
- If bison are moved to areas of state and hunting is allowed – access & ability to handle – retrieval is issue
- May not reharvest based on history
- If hunting season, make it year round.
- Don't just want to cull bison. Want it to become a hunt experience with all associated benefits to local economy. This would improve support for bison/management.
- Hear complaints that Yellowstone hunt is not a true hunt. Too much like a canned shoot. Want to see bison hunting more like a serious hunt. More traditional hunt.
- If it's fair chase, I'm all for it.
- Will there be a hunting season
 - Like other wildlife in MT
- What Hunting Regulations will Apply
- Some of same groups that were against Bison Hunting are now advocating a wild population to be hunted.
- Hunters deserve a fair chase opportunity
- How do you care for the meat and animal when you hunt in remote areas? (e.g. CMR)
- Any effort to legitimize the bison as a wild animal must provide sportsman (hunters/guides) must be a focus that hunters are satisfied
- If hunting is option – tags bought by nonhunters to keep from hunting
- Conflict between hunting interests
 - Bison vs. elk – deer etc
- Hunt season structure
- If only way discussed to manage is to hunt that means you need 3,000 in order to hunt 1,000 a year

- If start w/ 1,000 then 2 years of calves = 3,000
 - If in a 6 week hunting season you would be taking 20/day most processing plants could not do 20 /day
- Is there any public land large enough to accumulate a herd
- Concern on whether the department has identified locations to place bison.
- How many acres would be required especially since two alternatives mention 400 or 1,000 – how much land would be required for that size herd?
- Montana is fairly inhabited. Location placement needs to be a concern. Don't want negative impact on people living/working.
 - One of the most important ideas given from group
- How to keep herd in check with in population mgmt size
- Population Control
- We can't control the elk herd size in HD 445. How will we control bison herd size.
- How will FWP control the population?
- Will FWP consider non-hunt bison management techniques such as at Custer NP or Antelope Island?
- Concern – person property right will be impacted by those special interest groups that put bison ahead of person property right and abuse process to do that
- Private property rights most important
- Landowners have a constitutional Right to protect Their property
- If possible that Landowner can destroy Bison that come onto Their property
- Be Responsible To Neighboring Landowners No Matter where the herd is.
- Managing buffalo as wildlife would be a threat to property rights
- Are ranchers going to be able to protect their property from depredation w/ bison?
- I think the whole idea is an infringement on private property rights and I don't think they can be contained on public property
- Concerned that private property bison owners would put out of business with the introduction of wild bison
- Far and away the largest concern is property rights
- Private property does not have an inalienable right to do whatever you want
- Major intrusion of private prop rights to whoever & wherever bison are imposed on them
- Bison as wildlife cannot have the ability to move in & out of private property w/ out causing damage
 - This is our bread & butter
 - If bison become wildlife this is our last waltz
- If these do come on to the landscape & private property owners are not willing to accept damage (crops) – should not be held accountable for a new wildlife species that is thrown upon us
 - We're not gonna be in business
 - A free-ranging bison is just not acceptable due to damage concerns & public safety
- People raising bison's property rights are the same as all others.
- Property rights need to be protected a person should not get in trouble for defending their property from wolves or buffalo
- Game damage to private property – how to handle game damage hunt?
- Potentially Large herds, creating High dollar amounts of Damage.
- Damage to High dollar specialty crops.
- These animals are causing damage
 - People who live in town → may not be affected
 - They don't feel it will affect them personally
- Scenario – if a wild bison. Comes from a free-ranging. Group wanders into town and ruins your yard & house (damage)
 - How will you feel
- Buffalo could potentially become another deer/elk problem.
 - Damage on property
- Buffalo are not anymore a threat to damaging property
- I don't think we need another animal out there that we need to worry about.
- How population Expansion will Affect private Landowner & will they be compensated

- Need harvest objectives, population objectives, financial assistance for depredation/ damage
- If bison are classified as wildlife how will private prop owner be compensated for damage?
- With managing predators there seems to be fed funds that have gone away. I am waiting on a bill that would...
 - Is this going to be federal funds available for management as well as making sure they are disease free – WY has passed a bill that has reimbursed ranchers \$500,000 if they lose their herd to brucellosis or predators.
- As landowner I support /feed deer & elk that are supposed to be owned by FWP & I leave public land an pay fees to run my cattle on public land – is FWP going to start reimbursing me for running animals on my land?
- Buffalo can co-exist with livestock
- Is there going to be any funding for when bison start breeding cows since the ideas that bison don't breed cows is a crock.
- Domestic bison – cattle – in area when free roaming open range grazing of domestic cattle
- How does FWP manage a wild-free-ranging herd with or in the proximity to domestic herds nearby?
- There was a domestic herd across the fence
 - What would keep them from mixing
- Proximity to domestic herds and keep separate – private containment – get out & commingle
- Believe that bison can coexist w/ wildlife.
- Interaction – competition with other species
- Hunting vs. bison being sold through producers.
 - Custer State Park makes more \$ selling off their excess bison then FWP would make through selling bison licenses
- Having a huntable herd of Bison would be an Economic Benefit
- Do not justify free roaming bison because that was the way it used to be. Different economic times.
- Effects of local economy/tax base and grazing on public land.
- If this comes to pass – are they going to provide us with a new house & a new job
- If Bison move onto school Trust Land, who will make up the difference.
- How is the Economic Benefit measured?
- Adverse Economic Impact on County Gov.
- If revenue is made from the Bison herd where is it going to go?
- Economy Bison won't help economy on public land
 - Not needed for Bison preservation
 - Not needed for food
- Unknown impacts – may have more impact than expected
- The adverse affect on Landowner Conservation programs
- Not definitely against but want to make sure people are protected
- Even though I'm very much in favor, I don't want to see bison introduced at the expense of the ranchers.
- Cost of people food supply, what is this going to do to the consumer over time
- Ranchers cannot support anymore wildlife
- Buffalo are a food source
- Private agendas/bison program not necessary for out of state interest
- A bison on the CMR will not impact a rancher in Cascade. Need to tally address range and scope of impact a given population of bison will have
- Who will it impact – who will it hurt.
- Due to bison issues landowner that are in block management will not reenroll
- Landowners that do not agree with the direction FWP is going w/ Bison – access will be denied to hunters
- What is the motivation for more bison in MT – if motive is to push out cattle producers to have a big bison range then they are ruining peoples livelihood* what is the motivation for more bison?
 - It is more restraints on people's livelihood in general ranchers people that raise horse, agricultural producers – AG in general
- The conservationist & environmentalist need to keep the producers on the land
 - Producers were the 1st conservationists
- It's the many others who come in and say “this is my land” then they dump their garbage
- Could interrupt private grazing programs

- Don't know how you can keep animals where they are supposed to be w/out getting into private property. If person has public lands they are leasing w/in that area will they lose them – is this about turning public land over to FWP to use for animals?
- Don't allow international groups/governments to classify the bison as an endangered species.
- Potential site on Rock Mountain Front means bison will migrate in winter for food & the right habitat
- Read in background “Ecology” – that international community would like the bison. Listed on the international T&E list because there are so few loans of the minimum populations
 - In reference to the above bullet – how would effect hunting & any other state mgmt plan
 - Then we may as well shut down MT
- If bison are for some reason are listed as threatened or endangered what then? ESA species has consequence to ALL
- Buffalo are wildlife and should be managed like all other wildlife.
- If buffalo become wildlife it would further the distrust between farmers, ranchers & FWP
- FWP still planning to do free-ranging bison if bison are designated as wild
- Fenced, free-ranging, wild & domestic & managed are all different aspects of this game
- Definition of free-ranging. Is an issue
- Are they going to be wildlife or livestock
- Is managed diff than free-ranging?
- Say bison do get wildlife design
 - If they do – how – where are they going to be placed
 - And what happens to the domestic bison – are they going to wipe those out
- Bison are also classified as game animal so we're screwed
- Not being adequately addressed
- Average persons understand the difference between how bison are classified. Wildlife (public trust species) what a landowner can do – property rights – livestock classification means owner has responsibility to keep on their property – respect for neighbors property rights
- Bison that are livestock escape if in area where (*illegible*) YNP – are – keep separate?
- Inconsistent labeling – from domestic livestock – YNP- wildlife
- Ag producers consider bison a competitor. Leave them with dept. livestock.
- If bring back as free-roaming and treated as wildlife they do have to be managed – they can't run free. They must be managed as livestock i.e. will it be mandated that they have their shots.
- If want buffalo figure out how to have them privately.
- If you do move to other area classify as livestock to protect private property rights
- Would bison be classified as wildlife or domestic?
- For a properly run state park if classified as livestock, if they are fenced in properly, and numbers are managed properly and if bison are managed properly
- Come up with hard set of rules to allow private herds and tribal herds
- What is the definition of “wild”
- Def of free-roaming bison I would like to see 1 def since it seems to be all over the place.
- Who is going to manage the herd? Which Agency
- Didn't know that in 1995 Law was passed so ignoring that, why is there a need for FWP to manage them
- What would FWP's role with managing buffalo and how is FWP held accountable
- Is FWP aware that there is the potential that the new legislature may pass a bill that the governor could sign into law that could end this whole process
- How have the bills that were past in the last session impacted what FWP is doing on this issue?
- MT does have a law that wildlife belong to the state
- If Allow private herds then let private herd owner have responsibility.
- Is FWP going to designate a specific game management specialist to manage bison only or will it be done regionally?
- What is Enough Bison
- . Why do they want bison? In the 1st place – “Get rid of us” “Already have 1 YNP”
- Do we have a herd somewhere?
- Will the bison that are moved going to be the pure genetic bison from YNP or could they come from other herds that may have cattle gene introgression and have/how will they be tested?

- Has FWP Looked into How other countries Handle similar issues.
- We need more Data on Buffalo.
- If this unfortunate action would come to pass it would be imperative to look at Moise & S. Dakota herds to ensure bison health & welfare
 - Look at management #s, disease prevention
- To keep the right #s you have to cull
 - Have to look at a mgmt system
 - There are at least 2 good ones out there
- We already have a lot of people raising bison. We need to look to see what they are doing right before we move forward with this plan.
- As with wolf – it is a learn as you go for management – unknowns will have to be addressed – what are FWP's abilities to react
- Big education and work out something for everyone.
- Want to see FWP produce an educational product on how livestock producers are dealing w/ bison in areas inhabited now
 - One of the most important ideas given from group
- It's a learning process for all
- The public at large is not very well educated on what wild populations of bison would look like.
- Not a good track record with wildlife management i.e.. wolves
- No matter what great intentions FWP has in their plan staff do not have the skills, talents or capabilities to manage bison on the landscape
- I think it's going a very difficult animal for FWP to manage
 - Especially at the expense of other wildlife.
 - I'd like to know how much money is generated from the Henry Mountain hunt (UT) and compare this dollar amt. to how much is spent on management.
- Fish and game took on this plan w/ the wolf system and thought it would take 10 years to get to where got quickly and now they want to take bison on so it will be two problems.
- If the wolf program has not worked and this program is not working why would we want to introduce another problem
- Public don't believe their concerns will be heard – respected
- Moving goal post is cause of distrust with Gov. agencies
- If this comes to pass – would like to see local government have a say
 - Think it will be expensive
 - Wolf & grizzly bears expensive
- ? Public relations problem for FWP – public – Yellowstone NP livestock
- All concerns of all people need to be addressed
- #1 thing on scoping
 - Info on what's going on
 - Stories are pretty negative
 - Past activity that has been associated with these stories – What is the cause of these negative stories
- Why is FWP considering this
 - WHY
- Who is all behind this? Are there conservation groups lobbying the legislature to do this? We had a good system before w/ them contained but new people want them loose to roam.
- Concern on how/what criteria was use to determine those are right/wrong.
- People appreciate being part of process and want to be heard voice valued – not dismissed
- Who instigated the bison issue?
- How would citizens be put on the regional working group- volunteer, appointed?
- I came 140 miles to hear questions and answers from my south neighbors – I am getting questions from my neighbors but not fish and game.
- How much public comment/opinion is being considered/accepted during this process?
- I want the questions answered.

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- Why is FWP getting into the business – you don't hunt cattle.
- How many times do we have to say no – after the meeting in Shelby on the Lincoln place the consensus was NO
- Folks that have no direct contact to bison – want to and may have say on what will happen – folks = NY city etc.
- Weight of the people affected should be more than people back east
- Who are the multiple organizations who identified potential areas as suitable
 - Are those areas going to have boundaries
 - Major expansion of the costly government
 - Suitability of a site is under debate
- Need some sort of def between state and federal there is a lot of confusion btw YNP and state.
- There are a lot of Montana and Americans that are Fed up w/ programs & stimulus plans we continue to say no to but they will bulldoze through any way – Is the govt for the people or are the people for the govt? Govt is elected to protect our rights
- When are other federal agencies going to become involved in the scoping EIS process the sooner the better?
- Indian Reservations Are Independent Nations, why not give them buffalo
- Spirituality with Indian People
- Bring Native American History/Data to the table.
- Federal treaties w/ N. Americans which say they have the right to hunt and implied issue that those who do not have explicit treaties might
 - Which tribes have treaties, which do not, and how do we plan to assimilate them together. This is a fed issue not state.
- Gather Information From Indian Tribes That Have Bison herds.
- Build a pishkin and use it
- Would Tribes be Logical way to address Excess numbers of Bison in the YNP park
- Big part of Indian culture.
- Sad that we (Native Americans) pay taxes to an organization that is exempt from the law because if the bison went to the reservation that exemption is interesting
- Food Bank viable option for bison exiting YNP. Distribution of meat to many instead of 1 hunter
- Force National Parks to Manage Bison
- Why not set up a firing Line on Yellowstone National Park Border.
- Why can't a line be Drawn at Yellowstone National park Boundary
- Force Federal Fish & Wildlife Service to contain Bison in Yellowstone Park (free roaming bison)
- Why hasn't in- Yellowstone N.P. bison been managed-/hunted?
- We would like to have YNP be a good neighbor to MT & maintain the genetics & the appropriate #s for year round habitat
 - Manage for habitat, disease for their (the bison) benefits
- Idea is over whelming. If it did not work in YNP why would FWP think it would work some where else?
- Did not want to kill in YNP got upset why would they let us kill them somewhere else and then how will the population be managed.
- If bison could not be managed correctly in YNP why move the problem? If not enough feed for bison in park they want to come out – Animals want to come out to breed – they are territorial Maybe the territorial or breeding grounds are too small and they want to come out.
- Is This Just a step Towards “The Big Open”
- Need collaboration From other Agencies To deal with Natural Disasters Affecting Bison
- I think the lack of transparency in the way the FT Peck bison transfer was handled created a lack of trust between FWP and the public
- Who is responsible for bison that get off the reservation?
 - If bison have already done damage what happens
- FWP part of the Governors admin
 - FWP needs to rebuild that trust
- Draw this line – as soon as a move was signed by the Governor & Ft Peck the bison were free to move

- The 65 bison moved up to Fort Peck had been in quarantine for 5 years and were tested and shown to be brucellosis free – would the bison being used also go through a quarantine period to show they are also brucellosis free?
- Transfer of ownership- YNP to FWP to Turner to Tribes to?
- Funds to implement an alternative?
- What is the cost for a 2 ½ year process? If it comes to nothing it is all a waste of \$.
- Who will bank roll this confinement, management of these animals? Fed govt is already trillions \$ in debt
- Cost of process – EIS \$ spent take away from something else – maybe as or more important
- Cost – to start-
 - Then to counties – towns – tax payer
- Cost Estimates where Funding comes from.
- How is FWP going to raise Funds for Managing herds
- Accumulative effects of your economic welfare
- What part of licensing \$ will got to this program
- Are we as tax payers being wise for getting another programs for fed funding
 - More programs ↑ taxes
- Negative affect on National Debt. Already overspending by 50%
- Need to identify who is paying for all of this.
- Moving bison to reservations is not a good use of license dollars.
 - Want my license dollars used to improve opportunity for sportsmen
- Is this the best use of these dollars
- Look for alternative funding besides license dollars
- This is a state issue w/ national significance. Look for funding Nationwide. Private donors, NGO's.
- Need to identify who all the stake holders (financial) are
- FWP deals w/ all wildlife
 - Wolf → federal program
 - Grizzly→ “
 - Does FWP seek the work
- Someone in the FWP hierarchy needs to tell the feds to take care of their own program
- 21st Century why should we go back to 19th century
- If you could Bring Back The Dinosaur would you
- New Governor, New F & G Commission
- Bison management is a BIG Experiment.
- I hope I will not be affected by placement of bison on the CMR but the wolf issue and impacts statewide has me concerned
- I think the state has higher priorities than Bison expansion
- It is like we are going backwards not fwd – we are in the computer age – why are we going back to when buffalo roamed.
- What pushed the cattle producers out of the Gardner basin since it used to be big cow country?
- Don't overlook the Historical legacy of wildlife restoration.

Alternatives:

- Don't move to other areas away from YNP
- Just try one site
 - “Test site”
- There are some of us that would like to see a “wild” Bison herd.
- Why aren't they offered To upstate New York or other Large population Centers
- Would like to see 6 Alternative sites. 3 North 3 South.
- Why do you want something on the land that will harm me?
 - We don't want that ↑ to happen
 - This may put us in the No Action Alternative

- Is it possible that that bison will go to the Blackfoot reservation
 - Or in conjunction with the CMR
 - I feel these would be good locations
- Nothing - “status quo”
- No action – MT is not a recreational play area for the out of staters, rich & famous, tourists, etc
- At a minimum establish experimental population at first then evaluate success and landowner tolerance before moving forward
- Would like to see the management approach of a ‘zone management’ where there were different (more liberal) harvest/population objectives near livestock producers with concerns
- Put bison in central park
- Area that could be proposed to free-ranging bison
 - A large expanse of public land that could be grazed year round
 - CMR & monument
 - Rules out the Rocky Mountain Front – winters/ heavy snow pack
- Restoration of free-ranging bison population that meets the preferred herd size for genetics
- No action
- No bison alternative
- We don’t want this
- People that are affected & will be put out of business don’t want this
- Issue –Why do we have to have it as free-ranging – could there be some sort of compromise. There are some parks that have bison and people can see them and it meets the producers’ needs. Such as Custer State Park which is a great example.
- No action it would save a lot of \$ - How a good program before (containment in YNP). Maybe they should go to the slaughter if they get out of the park